

Mayor David Anderson called the special council meeting of June 25, 2014 to order at 5:05 p.m. Present for the meeting were Mayor Anderson, Council Members Ron Smith, Connie Wells, and Tom Mayo, Clerk Kris Larson, City Administrator Stephen Boorman, City Attorney Andrakay Pluid, Water Treatment Operator Doug Ladely, Water/Sewer Operator Mike Wade, and Jean Diel. Councilman Rick Alonzo was gone on personal business.

The purpose of the special meeting was to approve special event permit, catering permit, and discuss water, sewer, and street departments.

Connie Wells moved to approve the special event permit for Bob Pecora, New West Rodeo, for the PRCA Rodeo at the fairgrounds on June 27-28, 2014. Tom Mayo seconded the motion. The motion passed – Ron Smith “yes”, Connie Wells “yes”, Tom Mayo “yes”.

Ron Smith moved to approve the catering permit for Dan and Jill Nystrom doing business as the Rusty Moose Tavern and Grill for a beer garden at the fairgrounds on June 27-28, 2014. Connie Wells seconded the motion. The motion passed – Ron Smith “yes”, Connie Wells “yes”, Tom Mayo “yes”.

Stephen Boorman said the interview process was held for the water/sewer department superintendent. We have four talented, quality people in the water/sewer department with knowledge and skills but we need leadership and team building. There is also a morale issue between the water/sewer and street departments so our recommendation is to merge the water/sewer department and the street department as a public works department; appoint John Youngwirth as acting public works superintendent; and advertise internally for a public works superintendent. He said if all goes well we may advertise for an entry level person to be hired for the departments. Ron Smith asked what happens to the interview process for the water/sewer superintendent, if it just goes by the wayside. Stephen said yes. Ron does not understand as we have four qualified people in the water/sewer department and we are thinking of hiring someone from the outside. Stephen said we have four quality people that understand the water and sewer industry. They are knowledgeable and skilled but the quality we are looking for is not the day to day work as much as leadership, management of budgets, and all that goes with the supervisory side of it. Ron asked about the four other candidates having those skills. Stephen said the recommendation is because we feel that it will provide the best leadership and direction for that department, and it is the best thing for our rate payers and citizens.

Connie Wells asked if the public works superintendent position would be on a temporary basis to see how things would go and asked if we needed to hire another laborer right away. Stephen said he thinks we need to hire another laborer fairly quickly as we are short-handed at this time. Ron queried that we no longer need a superintendent but now need someone over all of it. Stephen said basically we merge two superintendent positions into one and bring in another laborer. He said we may not have much savings but it would increase efficiency and we would end up with the same head count. Ron does not think we should make a decision until we have a full council and he does not think the process we are following is being fair to the other city employees within that department.

Connie asked Andrakay if the advertisement could be opened up to only city employees so they could apply for this position. Attorney Andrakay said we recently adopted a policy so that we could advertise internally before going out to the public so we could do this. Tom Mayo asked Andrakay if she is comfortable with the memo submitted to council. Andrakay said she was. Ron asked for clarification that Andrakay is comfortable with it because we are doing away with the first process and going out for another one. Andrakay said yes.

Ron asked why we went through the first process of interviewing and if that was when the light went off that we needed the public works person because there was no one within the department that could take care of the supervision. Stephen said you learn a lot during an interview process, and everyone in the water/sewer department was interviewed and that was good. There was value to the interview process but when we came out of it there was consensus that this is the way we need to go for the city. He said this is a change and change does not come naturally.

Mayor Anderson said we have been discussing for some time the possibility of having a public works director and eliminating a department head and it is quite common in cities of our size. Stephen said he had spoken to the Mayor some time ago about this being one of the options on the menu and during the interview process the option seemed to make sense.

Ron said the street department will do some water work at times, and he questioned the difference in pay. Stephen said the wage proposal that was submitted to council last meeting had a structure so each person has upward growth based on experience, skill levels achieved or certifications achieved. Ron asked if this position was in mind when the pay proposal was developed. Stephen said it was not as the wage structure was suggested several years ago by John Youngwirth to Connie. Connie said currently and in the past we have had sharing of employees from different departments. Stephen agreed that labor is shared. Ron asked why we have to do anything. Connie said we are only looking at a superintendent that will be over both departments instead of just one. Ron asked how many employees we have in the street. Stephen said there are four employees in the street and when we were at a full head count there were five employees in the water/sewer. Stephen said we would have eight employees and one supervisor rather than seven employees and two supervisors as it was in the past. Ron asked if the other supervisor would be on board with this change. Stephen said John Griffin was the water/sewer superintendent and he left so that is what started the process. Ron does not agree with this and does not think it is fair to the employees.

Mayor Anderson said the last two supervisors in the water department were uniquely opposite. Jim Fritzsche was new to the water/sewer department and was an excellent supervisor and John Griffin was a water/sewer expert from Washington State that wanted to live here and he had great technical skills. He said we probably do not need or cannot afford a supervisor who is laden with expertise and background but not a hands on, operational in the trench kind of guy. Stephen said we have good access to technical expertise. We have Welch Comer on the water side and JUB Engineering on the sewer side and also Mike Klaus who is a city employee on call, so we have very good resources that we can access for technical issues. Ron thinks the supervisor should know everything that is going on, and this new department head will not have knowledge or understand how to run the water department because he is only responsible for supervising.

He further stated that he will be supervising individuals that he does not really know what they are doing because he does not have the expertise to know what is going on. Stephen said supervisors do not always have the expertise to run the entire departments. Tom Mayo said he is trying to understand Ron's point but he does not understand his objections. Ron said we are considering putting someone in charge of the water/sewer department that does not know anything about the department plus we speak of in-house or hiring from within and we had four qualified water department employees but we are looking at someone else. Tom said in-house to him means anyone in the city. Ron said people need to have training and it should be looked at from position to position.

Tom said during the interview process he came to appreciate the guys even more than he had previously. He got to know the water employees much better and he came away from the process with a leadership situation change needed. He said we have good employees that are knowledgeable, talented, and hardworking but there seemed to be a lack of direction. He wanted someone that had shown that they had leadership skills and had demonstrated that in their department and could carry it over to the water/sewer department as there is not a need for more talent but leadership is needed. Connie agreed and said all the employees in the water/sewer department are very valuable and know their jobs but need leadership. Ron asked if they lack leadership. Tom said he thinks the department is somewhat dysfunctional now and that is not on the guys that are still there. We had a supervisor in place that had all the credentials but Tom thinks he fell down in other ways and there is a void there now. He said this solution seemed the best way to fill it.

Mike Wade asked if he could comment. Mayor Anderson said no as that was earlier in the meeting.

Tom Mayo moved to go ahead with the recommendation of staff as stated in the memo. Connie Wells seconded the motion. Mayor Anderson clarified the motion to merge water/sewer and street departments into a public works department, have John Youngwirth be the acting public works superintendent, advertise internally for a public works superintendent, and advertise for an entry level maintenance laborer for the public works department. Tom withdrew his motion because he said there were employees here that he cares about that would like to speak and we can wait for a full council to make this decision. Mayor Anderson said we would re-agendize the subject for next Tuesday.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:22 p.m.